



Upstart kettle corn company has second thoughts about 'Wizard of Oz'-related moniker

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By **Shandra Martinez | The Grand Rapids Press**

GRAND RAPIDS -- Dorothy & Toto's Gourmet Kettle Corn quickly has found the yellow brick road to success, but soon will be jettisoning its "Wizard of Oz" moniker.

In less than six months, the addicting treat has been picked up by a couple dozen stores, including the Spartan Stores Inc. chain D&W Fresh Market and several independent grocers.

Orders have grown from 30 cases to 150 cases a week. To keep up with demand, a second kettle has been added and the staff has tripled to six.

"We are just trying to grow at a steady pace," said Kyle Behm, majority owner in the three-generation family business.

The next step will be to make production a 24-hour option.

But now, it's time for the brand to give up its ties to the iconic 1939 film featuring Judy Garland. Its name is being changed to Dorothy & Tony's Gourmet Kettle Corn.

Behm wants to avoid any possible litigation that could pop up as the company becomes more successful. "We want to play it safe," said Behm, who decided to change the name on the advice of his neighbor, a patent attorney.

Dorothy and Tony are the first names of Kyle Behm's grandparents. Initially, they decided to make a play on the famous film because Tony's nickname is Toto. The product label designed by Behm featured a photo of a teenage Dorothy -- who resembled Garland in the film -- with a dog. The new image features a kettle of popcorn under a rainbow.

In January, Behm, a recent Michigan State University graduate, took over his snowbird grandparents' seasonal business and moved it to a storefront at 2106 Plainfield Ave. NE, a building that also houses Weatherhead & Sons, Inc.

Behm's parents, Dan and Barb Behm, and grandparents, Dorothy and Tony Meyers, have minor stakes in the business.

The corn is made in two oversized kettles in the store. The large kernels are popped in hot oil and a sugar mixture. Salt is added as the popcorn is taken out and left to cool.

Before the storefront, the Meyers sold the treat at local farmer's markets, and continue to do so. During winter, the couple relocates to sunny southern Arizona to run a similar business. The couple bought the business in 1990 from an Arizona businessman, but have perfected the recipe over the years.

The store also is a popular outlet for the kettle corn, attracting long lines of customers.

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